

TO:  
Paul Mooney

With the exhibition PATHS OF ABSTRACT ART The Cleveland Museum of Art presents some of the most significant painting and sculpture being created today. Cries of outrage and anguish may be heard - but this is better than silence for that indicates indifference or fear. There was no controversy over art in Nazi Germany nor is there any in Communist Russia.

The outraged and the anguished should give themselves a chance. Modern art may not follow closely the standards of the old masters, but in truth it is not so different as at first appears. At any rate, opposition, if it is intelligent, should be based on knowledge of the subject. Picasso long ago remarked - if we don't understand the Chinese language, we must not conclude that it has no meaning or that it is a hoax. The way of wisdom is to learn the new language and then judge - it might even be found beautiful. In any case, this is the art of our time and it cannot be wished away or denied.

Actually this art is not as mysterious as it sometimes appears. An effort is needed to adjust to a new vocabulary, but we already have the example of music as an abstract art which depends on pure sound to suggest emotions and to create beauty. The abstract artist asks no more than the same freedom - using color rather than sound.

One further word, not all abstract art is important - nor was all representational art - the best will survive as it always has. But let us act with intelligence and a more open mind than did our ancestors who rejected the modern artists of their day - Rembrandt, Courbet, Daumier, Manet, Monet, Renoir, and many, many others who today are recognized as important masters.

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